

Government, the people of Afghanistan's desire to live in peace. It's in the interest of the United States that we continue to help you. It's in our security interests that this democracy flourish because when freedom takes place in Afghanistan, it will set an example for what's possible in other parts of the broader Middle East. When people see that there's hope in a part of the world that had been ravaged by war, had been terrorized by brutal extremists, when people realize there's a different way of life, they'll demand the same things. And it's peace that we all want, and it's liberty that will help us keep that peace.

So, Mr. President, you've got strong friends here. I appreciate your courage. As you know, every time we meet, I ask you, "Are you making progress; are more children going to school; are more health care clinics operating; are the security forces more capable of dealing with the extremists?" I expect progress, and you expect progress. And I appreciate the report that you have given me today. So thank you, and welcome.

**President Karzai.** Thanks very much, Mr. President. And, as always, thank you for the great hospitality that you have always given to the Afghan people and to me personally, to my delegation. Camp David was a lovely place—I wish one could stay there longer sometime in the future. [*Laughter*]

Afghanistan, indeed, has made progress, but, Mr. President, that should be a tribute to you, your leadership, and the American people for all that we have achieved there in Afghanistan, especially the thing that you mentioned, reduction in child mortality—from a country that was the worst in the world to a country that's coming up and saving 85,000 lives, especially this year, of children under 5; and for a country that was self-sufficient 40 years ago in zero production to becoming again self-sufficient in the production of food after the years of drought, misery, and want, and the roads and education and the Afghan flag flying around the world. So there is an endless list for which we have to be grateful to you.

And most important of all, Mr. President, something that we tend to forget from time to time, the liberation of Afghanistan, such an important thing for the Afghan people.

I don't know if you feel it in the United States, but we feel it so immensely in Afghanistan that we are now, once again, a free country, liberated from the grips of terrorism and Al Qaida and their associates. And we love our flag flying around the world—I love to see it in this room, by the way.

Thank you very much.

**President Bush.** Good. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:53 a.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

### Remarks on the No Child Left Behind Act in New York City

September 26, 2007

Good morning. Laura and I are really pleased to be here in New York City and really pleased to be able to be here with the mayor and the superintendent and our Secretary of Education. And particularly, we're pleased to be with the students and principals of—the principal and students of PS 76.

These are hardworking students who are learning to read and write and add and subtract. And we had a chance to visit with them and learn about their dreams, and we really appreciate you all being here. It's exciting for us to be here.

Last week, the school system here in New York City received the Broad Prize for Urban Education. This is one of the most prestigious education prizes in the country. The award is given every year to large urban school districts that have shown the greatest overall performance and improvement in student achievement, while narrowing the achievement gap amongst poor and minority students.

In bestowing this recognition on New York City, the Broad Prize Committee highlighted the city's strong leadership. And that starts with Mayor Mike Bloomberg. The mayor is a no-nonsense guy who understands that if you set a goal, you expect to see results in achieving that goal. He knows how to ask tough questions, and he's pretty good about moving aside bureaucracy that will inhibit the people he has selected to achieve the goal. And the person he selected to be the

chancellor is Joel Klein, who really is one of the country's finest school superintendents.

I appreciate both these men being here. And I want to congratulate you on this well-deserved honor.

This city tackled the challenges of underperforming schools in such a way that it has become a model for urban schools. This achievement is a hopeful sign for other school districts across America. If New York City can do it, you can do it. And one of the things that's interesting about the prize and our ability to communicate with each other is that if people are truly interested in figuring out how New York City accomplished its objectives, they ought to e-mail the school district. They ought to look at the strategy. They ought to figure out what the mayor and superintendent have done to empower principals and teachers and parents. And teachers and parents and the principals and the students also deserve credit when it comes to recognizing this award.

I also believe that part of the reason why New York City did well is because of the No Child Left Behind Act, which raises standards, insists upon accountability in the schools all across our country. The No Child Left Behind Act is working. I say that because the Nation's Report Card says it's working. Scores are improving, in some instances hitting alltime highs. Children across America are learning. The achievement gap that has long punished underprivileged students is beginning to close. And I'm going to spend a little time talking about that today.

First, I do want to recognize the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings. I do want to recognize Louise Sedotto, who is the principal of PS 76. You know, one of the things that's interesting—I bet you Joel will tell you this—that when you find a school that is performing well, you find a principal who is willing to think outside the box and lead. And I appreciate you being here, Louise, and I congratulate you and your teachers. I bet you, when I ask your teachers, do they like you, they'll say, "We not only like her; we love her." *[Laughter]*

And I want to thank the students again who are here. And the reason I'm glad they're standing here is because all the old folks up here recognize that the future of

our country depends on a high-quality education for our children. And that was the reason why people from both political parties came together in Washington to pass the No Child Left Behind Act.

The law is based on this premise: The Federal Government invests money in education, and we ought to expect results in return for that investment. It's a pretty simple principle. If you're a taxpayer and you're spending your money, you want to make sure that money gets good results. And the best way to determine whether you get good results is to measure. Instead of just hoping for the best, we've asked States to set standards to hold schools accountable so that every child can read and do math at grade level.

Measuring results is important because it helps teachers spot problems early. You can't solve a problem unless you diagnose the problem, and it's best to diagnose problems early in a child's life. Measuring results gives parents information. If you're interested in getting parents involved in your schools, just post your results up for people to read. It's amazing how it gets a parent's attention when the schools aren't meeting expectations.

A system that doesn't hold people to account assumes that certain children cannot learn and that it's acceptable to shuffle them through school. Well, that's not acceptable in America, to shuffle children through school. That's what I have called the soft bigotry of low expectations. Through the No Child Left Behind Act, we have challenged that soft bigotry. And the Nation's Report Card shows we're making good progress.

Here's how the Report Card works. More than 700,000 students from every State have been tested. They've been tested in math and reading, and here are the results. In math, the scores for fourth and eighth graders were higher than they've ever been. In reading, the scores for fourth graders were also the highest on record. The Nation's Report Card shows that some of the achievement gaps amongst African Americans and Hispanic students are narrowing. In the fourth grade reading, the achievement gap between white and African American students is at an all-time low. In the eighth grade math, the achievement gap between white and African American and white and Hispanic students

has narrowed since 2003. What all this means is, No Child Left Behind Act is working for all kinds of children in all kinds of schools in every part of the country.

And so we've got to build on the progress. And that means Congress needs to reauthorize and strengthen the No Child Left Behind Act. The act is working; Congress needs to reauthorize it and make it better. Through this law, our Nation has made an historic commitment to America's children, and we have a moral obligation to keep that commitment. We must ensure that they have the skills they need to succeed in life, and in a global economy, that becomes even more important.

As Congress considers reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act, I've offered several proposals to help strengthen it. And Secretary Spellings is going to be on Capitol Hill to explain why these proposals will make a good law even better. One, we can lift achievement—student achievement higher by giving local leaders more flexibility in the law as well as providing funding to turn around troubled schools. I believe student achievement will be enhanced when families with children stuck in low-performing schools have a opportunity to send their child to a better school.

We should increase access to tutoring programs for students who struggle and make sure these children get the special help they need. If you measure and you find a problem, it's time to provide tutoring for those children so they can get up to speed. That's what happens here in New York City. The mayor and the superintendent and the principal say, "When we find a problem, we're going to address that problem early." And it's working.

We should reward teachers who improve student achievement in low-income schools. When you find a good teacher willing to go into a school that needs help, that teacher ought to be given an additional incentive.

We should make sure our children are prepared for the jobs of the future by expanding access to Advanced Placement courses and strengthening math and science education. As yesterday's positive Report Card shows, children do learn when standards are high and results are measured.

And so my call to the Congress is, don't water down this good law. Don't go backwards when it comes to educational excellence. Don't roll back accountability. We've come too far to turn back. And so Congress needs to work with this administration to pass legislation that helps—gives our children the education they deserve.

I don't think there's anything more important than the education of young people. I know that's how the mayor feels, and I know that's how the superintendent feels, and I know that's how Laura and Margaret feel. There's nothing more American than ensuring that all our children have the chance to realize their fullest potential and their highest dreams. And the improvement in New York City's public schools reminds us of what we can achieve when we set big goals and work hard to meet them.

And so I'm proud to be here to congratulate the good folks of New York City. I want to thank all involved with making sure our children have the skills necessary to realize the great hope of America. God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joel I. Klein, chancellor, New York City Department of Education; and Louise Sedotto, principal, PS 076 The Bennington School. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

## Remarks on Signing the College Cost Reduction and Access Act

September 27, 2007

Thank you all. Please be seated—unless you don't have a chair. [*Laughter*] I welcome you to the White House. I have the honor of signing a bill that will help millions of low-income Americans earn a college degree. I'm really looking forward to signing this bill. I love the fact that this country is dedicated to helping people who want to realize a dream.

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act expands one of America's most important and successful education initiatives, the Federal Pell Grant Program. For the last 6 years, I've worked to make sure that we expand Pell